

**HOUSING, SUPPORTIVE SERVICES, AND FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR SPECIAL
NEEDS POPULATIONS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

**Prepared for:
County of Los Angeles
New Directions Task Force
Interagency Operations Group
Special Needs Housing Alliance**

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The County of Los Angeles Special Needs Alliance (Alliance) was created by the New Directions Task Force (NDTF) on June 10, 2001. The purpose of the Alliance is to provide an ongoing forum for County departments, service providers, housing agencies, developers and other stakeholders to coordinate resources and implement projects that address the unique housing and service needs of specific special needs populations in the County.

The Special Needs Housing Alliance was also created to serve as a conduit and catalyst to unite housing and program interests in Los Angeles County and to proactively secure funding for special needs housing.

In June 2002, the Los Angeles County Interagency Operations Group (IOG) commissioned Shelter Partnership, Inc. to: 1) develop a survey that identifies the County-assisted housing available to special needs populations, services that are provided to the County clients in the County-assisted housing, and the resources that fund the housing and services; 2) interview the nine Alliance members with the survey and; 3) draft this report.

The survey utilized by Shelter Partnership was divided into three sections: housing, services and funding. A total of 43 surveys were conducted with the 9 Alliance members, collectively referred to as “County departments.”¹

The key findings were as follows:

- Approximately 58% of special needs program clients resided in one of the following types of housing – emergency shelter, temporary housing,² or transitional housing.
- In the 39 housing programs, roughly 15% of the total clients served by the County departments had special needs.
- Persons with mental illness were identified as the special needs population most in need of housing across the continuum.

¹ The participants in the survey are members of the Alliance, which consist of the Probation Department, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Department of Mental Health (DMH), the Department of Health Services (DHS) Office of AIDS Programs and Policy (OAPP), the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), the Department of Community and Senior Services (CSS), the Community Development Commission (CDC) / Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles (HACoLA), and the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA). However, two agencies included in this group are typically not considered to be actual county departments. LAHSA is a joint powers authority of the City and County of Los Angeles, while the CDC is an agency formed under state of California law to administer housing programs for the county. The CDC also incorporates the HACoLA, and hereafter the joint acronym (CDC/HACoLA) is used to describe programs administered by HACoLA. Both the CDC and LAHSA are labeled as “county departments” for this report since they fall under the jurisdiction of the Board of Supervisors and they have been included as county departments by members of the Alliance.

² The Alliance created a temporary housing category for some of the programs operated by various county departments. However, most federal, state, and local housing programs do not recognize temporary housing as a housing category. Please refer to Appendix C for more information on the housing types used in this report.

- Service Planning Areas 3 and 6 were noted as the most unserved / underserved for housing the County's special needs populations.
- Nearly 1 / 3 of survey respondents indicated that transitional housing was the most needed form of housing for six of the County's special needs populations.
- After transitional housing, permanent housing was identified as the second most needed type of housing for the County's special needs populations. Emergency shelter and temporary housing were identified respectively as the third and fourth most needed types of housing.
- Housing placement assistance was ranked the highest, most needed supportive service for four of the eight populations, and was ranked second for the remaining four special needs populations.
- The total amount of annual funding available for the County's special needs housing and service programs was \$105,616,412. Of this amount:
 - A minimum of \$30,273,466 (29%) in annual program funding must be used as follows: \$6,219,734 for capital activities, \$21,325,687 for rental assistance / leasing, \$771,734 for operating activities, and \$1,956,311 for supportive service activities.
 - An additional \$75,342,946 (71%) in annual program funding was considered flexible and available to address the County's unmet special needs housing and supportive service needs. The available program funding was eligible to be utilized across one or more of the four activities (capital, rental assistance / leasing, operating, or supportive service activities), depending upon the funding source.

Appropriate housing and supportive services for special needs persons continue to be a significant challenge for the County of Los Angeles. There is insufficient transitional and permanent housing with the necessary and appropriate services for all special needs populations.

Virtually all county departments receive funds from various sources that can be used for housing or services for a variety of special needs populations. Currently, special needs housing providers must work with individual departments and each department must decide how these funds are allocated. This greatly complicates the process of coordinating the capital, service and operational resources required for the production of special needs housing. It also makes it more difficult for the departments to access available funding sources and to efficiently assess the type of housing needed for various populations throughout the County.

As housing demand escalates among special need populations, it is imperative that the County takes the lead in establishing a proactive countywide strategy and operational mechanism to address these needs in a coordinated manner and provide a meaningful approach to the production of special needs housing.

Based on the findings of this report, and work completed to date by the Alliance, the following next steps are being recommended to enhance the supply of service-enriched special needs housing in the County of Los Angeles:

- Transition the Alliance away from its current role as a planning body into a more active, project-based, policy-driven operation. Request that the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) of the County Chair the Alliance during its transitional period.
- Consistent with the new operational role of the Alliance, develop a process/mechanism for prioritizing and coordinating flexible annual funding affecting special needs populations.
- Ensure Alliance members are represented by management staff that has access to decision makers within their department/agency, with the ability to commit available financial and staffing resources to implement policy, project or other decisions set by the Alliance.
- County departments should be assigned the lead role on a project-specific basis, depending upon the nature of the special needs population(s) being served.
- Utilize the services of technical assistance providers to support the coordination and project-specific aspects of the Alliance.
- Ensure that mechanisms are developed by Alliance members to maintain or enhance data collection efforts consistent with those outlined in this report.